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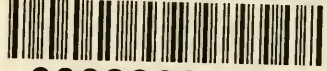
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Vol. XXVII

No. 4

THE WAKE FOREST STUDENT

JOHN CHARLES McNEILL
MEMORIAL NUMBER

DECEMBER, 1907

WAKE FOREST
N. C.

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WAKE FOREST STUDENT

VOL. XXVII

DECEMBER, 1907

No. 4

IN MEMORIAM TO JOHN CHARLES McNEILL

BY JAMES LARKIN PEARSON.

THE RIVALS.

Rose-crowned, with lifted veil and soft glad eyes,
She met him at the portals when he came;
For she was Life and he, full lover-wise,
Did kiss her hand and fervent love proclaim.

And they were boon companions, Life and he,
And fitly joined in every mood and thought;
They plighted love beneath the forest tree,
In Nature's school together they were taught.

His poet-heart was wakened into song;
Nor ever sang the nightingale so well;
Great thoughts that to Eternity belong
From his ripe lips in perfect numbers fell.

But gaunt-eyed Death sat envious and alone,
Perceiving how the happy pair were blest;
And she into a jealous rage was thrown,—
With fleshless palm she smote her hollow breast.

And in that mood Death made an awful vow
To lie in wait where Life and Poet strolled,
That she might plant her kiss upon his brow,
Touch his warm, singing heart and leave it cold.

And even so befell the tragic deed:
From Death's assault there was no arm to save;
And many hearts shall long in silence bleed,
While Life stands weeping by her Poet's grave.

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W. J. Hall

THE STUDENT LIFE OF JOHN CHARLES McNEILL

BY DR. CHAS. E. TAYLOR.

I have no definite recollection of my first meeting, in the fall of 1894, with Mr. McNeill. It was probably on the day of his matriculation as a freshman,—one of those days when one receives only a blurred impression of many unfamiliar faces. The ability to differentiate comes later. In the case of Mr. McNeill this could not have been very long delayed. From the first there was something exceptional about him which gave him a place apart.

The tall, slender youth with raven locks began on the threshold of his student life to show that he was of an unusual type, both as a student and as a man.

The record shows that during his first session at Wake Forest he made in Latin, Mathematics, and English the grades, respectively, of 98, 99, and 98. These results indicated that he was a first rate student and placed him, so to speak, upon the pedestal where stand the men who are leaders of their classes.

In order to have achieved these high averages in daily recitations and on examinations the young man must have been, and, indeed, he was, an assiduous worker. But I do not think that he knew the drudgery, the wearing grind of study. His mind was quick to discern and receive; his memory was tenacious in retaining.

Because he mastered rapidly and with comparative ease his allotted tasks, the casual observer would have judged of the excellence of his work by the results rather than by the process of acquisition. For he entered with zest into all the varied interests and activities of student life. He was ready to be welcomed into the social circles

of the little college town. With insatiable appetite he availed himself of the treasures of Library and Reading-room. It may be doubted whether, during the five years of his sojourn at Wake Forest, any other student read more widely or to better purpose than he. Though not an athlete himself, he took a genuine interest in the men of muscle and nerve among his friends and rejoiced with enthusiasm in every victory of "our men."

It not infrequently happens that young students become weary in well doing and that the hopes inspired by the freshman prove delusive before he becomes a senior.

So far was this from being the case with Mr. McNeill that he not only kept up the pace which he had set for himself, but actually improved upon it. The Rolls of the college show that during his senior year he made in Physics the grade of 100; in Chemistry, 99; in Moral Philosophy, 98; in English, 100; and in Biology, 99.

After taking his degree of Bachelor of Arts, Mr. McNeill returned to Wake Forest to do the work for the Master's degree and, incidentally, to render assistance as Instructor in English.

It was during this last session (1898-9) that I was brought into closer contact and more intimate personal relations with him than had been possible before. He was one of the four men who that year pursued with me the study of Philosophy in the Senior Class of the course. In this all the great problems of metaphysics and, incidentally, many of the doctrines of the Christian and other religions were discussed.

Again and again, after the bell had rung and the others had left, Mr. McNeill would remain, propounding questions, some of which no man could answer, or advancing theories which, even when they were not plausible, at least gave evidence of an eager love of truth and an alert

understanding. And though he was often daring in speculation, he was never flippant nor casuistic, but was at all times earnest and reverent.

Every young man who reads widely and thinks for himself almost inevitably passes, sooner or later, through a period of unrest. Hitherto he has accepted opinions and beliefs on the authority, in great part, of others. Now he begins to question all things. It is, perhaps, well that this should be the case. The struggle through a period of doubt may be painful, but it is sure, when unbiased by prejudice or passion and poisoned by no malign external influences, to settle and open sounder foundations and impart more decided convictions.

I believe that while he was at the college Mr. McNeill passed through such a crisis in his intellectual and spiritual life, and that he emerged from it still anchored to all that was fundamental and essential in the beliefs of his earlier youth.

Mr. McNeill was a popular man in college, and those who knew him best liked him most. For he was charitable in his judgments, courteous in his bearing, and kind in his actions. This does not imply that he showed a weak complaisance. His nature was rich in essential manliness and I well remember occasions when his strong sense of justice put him in opposition to prevailing public opinion. Indeed, one of the most marked characteristics of the man was his sturdy Scotch independence and his indifference to adverse opinion or criticism. To this spirit, perhaps, is due the fact that he was less careful than many young men as to dress and personal appearance. This was not that he took pride in being peculiar, but simply that he considered such matters as trivial and to be brushed aside as not meriting great attention.

* * * * *

To follow the career of Mr. McNeill as lawyer, professor and journalist would be to go beyond the scope of this article. All who knew him well at Wake Forest and had had opportunities for estimating his abilities believed that a successful and brilliant future lay before him. It was after only a brief experience at the bar that he became convinced that the profession was not congenial to his tastes or suited to his talents. Then for a year he filled a professor's chair in a Southern university before at last gravitating naturally into the work for which he was best fitted.

A wise Roman poet once wrote that what the gods want a man to do they make him want to do. This is only saying that in deciding upon one's lifework he is apt to recognize that his desires harmonize with his aptitudes. And Mr. McNeill's friends were happy in their belief that, in entering the field of journalism and in cultivating literature, he had found his best environment and true vocation. And the work already done by him while still a young man warrants their belief now that, had his life been spared, his pen would have won for him world-wide renown.

MCNEILL THE POET

BY PROFESSOR B. F. SLEDD.

It was in the autumn of 1895, if I remember aright, that John Charles McNeill matriculated in my Freshman-English class. I recall how I opened my eyes in wonder over his first composition. There was that indescribable something which we call style—real, genuine, style; the writing of one who handles his pen as to the manner born. Now, style in a Freshman's composition is almost as rare as speech among the birds; so I thought it well to ask Mr. McNeill whence he had derived his inspiration. But when the tall, dark-haired, dark-eyed boy came up to my desk, the question was never asked him. His very presence had spoken for him; the man and the style were one. Men of genius have ever possessed striking personalities, and Mr. McNeill certainly bore outwardly the marks of a genius. An assistant was needed at the time in the English department, and, Freshman though he was, McNeill was at once chosen for the place. And this was the beginning of a friendship that will ever be among the treasured memories of my life. Many a night the piles of compositions were forgotten as we talked the hours away over the poets. Even then McNeill was writing verses, some of which may be found in the numbers of THE WAKE FOREST STUDENT. The least mature of them will be found to possess a certain nameless charm which distinguishes them from the mere verse of college magazines.

Last night I went over McNeill's little volume once more—for the third time. On finishing it, I felt that the poet had rightly named it "Songs." Like his own favor-

ite poet, Burns, McNeill was the born singer. Nowhere did he attempt the lofty theme or the lofty utterance. His poems are always brief swallow-flights of song that dip their wings in the mingled shadow and sunshine of every-day life and skim away. The Scotch poets, from the old balladists down to Stevenson, have ever been a race of singers, and McNeill was Scotch to his finger tips.

On opening the little volume, one is at once struck with the absolute flawlessness of the workmanship. The severest critic would search in vain for ill-digested thoughts, extravagant figures, far-fetched conceits, halting metres, and bad rhymes. Even the least successful of the verses contain what Matthew Arnold calls the poet's fluidity of utterance. Let me quote a single short poem :

SUNDOWN.

"Hills wrapped in gray, standing along the west;
Clouds, dimly lighted, gathering slowly;
The star of peace at watch above the crest—
Oh, holy, holy, holy!

We know, O Lord, so little what is best;
Wingless, we move so lowly;
But in Thy calm all-knowledge let us rest—
Oh, holy, holy, holy!"

Perhaps we rather regret the absence of those very extravagances and youthful imperfections that constitute the chief charm of a poet's first volume. If we take the early works of the great masters of song,—of Keats, of Shelley, of Tennyson,—we stand bewildered as in a jungle, but the very jungle proclaims the fertility of the soil. I have always feared that McNeill attained his first success too easily, too readily; that he found his way too quickly into the magazines and newspapers. If there is

anything that can put the leaden cape on the poet's fancy, it is to be compelled to write to the dead, uniform level of the American magazines.

Another excellence of McNeill's poetry—and it is his chief claim to greatness—is its haunting quality. There are phrases, lines, and measures that stick in the memory, recurring to us over and over again. Take the following:

DAWN.

“The hills again reach skyward with a smile.
Again, with waking life along its way,
The landscape marches westward mile on mile,
And Time throbs white into another day.

Though eager life must wait on livelihood,
And all our hopes be tethered to the mart,
Lacking the eagle's wild, high freedom, would
That our's might be this day the eagle's heart.”

The lines illustrate, too, another quality of Mr. McNeill's poetry: Like all Scotchmen he never fails to preach a little, wherever possible,—quickly, unobtrusively, but a sermon nevertheless. And our hearts are always the better for the preaching.

And, most of all, in these sweet songs I catch the beating of a strong, manly heart; I hear the voice of one who loves home and mother and all the good old things of youth. Let me quote McNeill's one really successful sonnet:

HOME SONG.

“The little loves and sorrows are my song:
The leafy lanes and birthsteads of my sires,
Where memory broods by winter's evening fires
O'er oft-told joys and ghosts of ancient wrongs;
The little cares and carols that belong
To home-hearts, and old rustic lutes and lyres,
And spreading acres, where calm-eyed desires
Wake with the dawn, unfevered, fair, and strong.

If words of mine might lull the bairn to sleep,
And tell the meaning in a mother's eyes;
Might counsel love, and teach their eyes to weep
Who, o'er their dead, question unanswering skies,—
More worth than legions in the dust of strife,
Time, looking back at last, should count my life."

Here, as is nearly always true, the poet is his own best judge and critic.

Did time permit, I might speak of Mr. McNeill's keenness and sureness of eye and ear. Never a sight or a sound of the woods and the fields escapes him, and his nature-poetry has the happy inspiration of the born nature-lover.

* * * "an old gray stone
That humps its back up through the mold."
"Distant pastures send the bleat
Of hungry lambs at break of day."

Now, in conclusion, I must be pardoned if I refuse to attempt any estimate of Mr. McNeill's genius. It is enough that we hail him poet. Posterity will assign his rank. In the kingdom of the poets, as in the kingdom of the just, there is no first and last. Let us remember that McNeill was cut down in the flower of his manhood. It is not so much what he fulfilled as what he promised. Let us hope, too, and devoutly believe that John Charles McNeill is the morning star to the new day which is surely dawning in the Old North State.

IN MEMORIAM J. C. M.

BY H. F. PAGE.

The silver chord falls snapped in twain,
The golden bowl lies broken.
In this sad hour of bitter pain
How shall our grief be spoken?

No more his rare-attuned lyre
Will thrill to Sapphic measure;
No more his chalice bathed in fire
Will pour to us its treasure.

Ye fates that clip the mortal thread,
Your work is done untimely—
We gather here about our dead—
Would he had died sublimely!

But at this hour shall every blame
Be sunk in soul-deep sorrow;
The Art he loved shall shrieve his name
And keep his fame to-morrow.

“We know so little what is best,
Wingless, we move so lowly,”
In Thy all-pity grant him rest,
O God, most holy, holy!

JOHN CHARLES McNEILL

BY JOSIAH WILLIAM BAILEY.

Spring Hill is the name of a community in the heart of the original Scotch settlement of North Carolina, and generations of that substantial stock have come and gone without loss of the blood or the spirit which is everywhere their glory.

In this community John Charles McNeill, the poet, was born July 26, 1874, and there he was reared.

Of the contribution of locality, of blood and of moral and intellectual atmosphere to genius we can make no proper measure. But I regard it important to the purpose of this sketch that the reader first obtain a conception of the Spring Hill region and people.

The land lies low, and the far horizon makes its moving appeal wherever the eye may fall. The fields present vistas of corn and cotton and grass, with the woods of cypress and pine and gum in the back-ground. The houses are the headquarters of wide-sweeping and well-kept farms, and the vine and fig-tree flourish near by. Throughout the settlement winds the Lumber River, wine-colored, steady, deep and swift or slow according to the season; a darksome stream, where the red-throat, the pickerel and the large-mouth bass find homes all to their liking, save for the fisher-boy who overtakes them with bob and bait. To spend a sunset hour beneath the cypress gloom hard-by; to catch the note of the far-circling fields in the stilly hour; to respond to the color of the land and heaven and horizon and the sombre quiet all around—is to realize that this is the poet's clime.

“ The poet in a poet's clime was born.”

The center of this community is an ancient church, school, and temperance hall, the three being within speaking distance of one another. Of the civilization of this settlement I need say no more: these are their witnesses. The church was presided over throughout three generations by two really great ministers—Daniel White, the patron-saint—if the Scotch will tolerate that term—and John Monroe, the patriarch, of the people. It is impossible to measure the impress of these men; they ministered according to the best traditions of their callings. They were the wisest, the most eloquent, and the best men their people have ever known; their chosen leaders, their spiritual fathers and daily examples. Not only did they dominate the church, the school and the lodge; their lives prevailed over all, and do prevail to this day, though they have long been gathered to their fathers.

The temperance lodge was no insignificant member of this trinity of social, intellectual, moral and spiritual springs. Here the young people were accustomed to assemble to exercise their gifts in entertainments and debates. That there was sufficient interest to sustain the institution speaks abundantly of the moral fibre of the community, and I could produce an array of facts that would convince every other community in North Carolina that such an institution is worthy of all that it may require. I could name leaders now serving North Carolina who received here their strongest impressions and found play for their best gifts. So much for the locality.

John Charles McNeill is a lineal descendant of Daniel White and John Monroe; his grandfathers, John McNeill and Charles Livingston, emigrated from Argyle-shire, Scotland, about the beginning of the nineteenth century. His grand mothers were born in America. His

father, Duncan McNeill, now enjoying a hale old age, and his mother, Euphemia Livingston, who has lived to read the poet's exquisite lines to her, are most excellent people. Their home is the typical home of a Scotch farmer and *leader*—leading man—full of light, rich in books, and periodicals and music, given to hospitality and generous of comfort, a fireside of sweet living and high thinking. Captain McNeill is himself a stalwart citizen, fond of public speaking, in which he is accomplished; devoted to the young, one time an editor and lecturer, a writer of verse, an earnest supporter of his church and party, an insatiable reader, and, personally, a most delightful companion. His wife is likewise a woman of gifts and graces worthy of her line; gentle, all-womanly, her face a delight of sweetness and her ways the ways of a mother-heart. Their godly lives adorn their confession of Jesus Christ.

John Charles, born of such parents and reared in such a community, spent his youth in the occupations of the farmer's boy. His chief taste was to "mind the cows," and he knew also the plow and the hoe; but I have heard it said that he lost many a furrow because he would read and plow at the same time. To bring the cows home at evening; to do the chores of the household; to attend school in the hours; to fish and hunt and roam the woods and swim the river and explore the swamps whenever he could—these were the other elements of his making. He is to this day a woodsman of parts, the trees and flowers and birds and beasts, their habits and wants, are known to him as by second nature, and likewise, the homely features of farm-life, the negro songs and customs, the local ne'er-do-wells, the original characters—one would infer upon a brief acquaintance with him that

they, no less than the more innocent children of nature, were his peculiar friends.

He entered school in early youth and proved an apt student. His preparation being completed in the Spring Hill and Whiteville Academies, he entered Wake Forest College, graduating therefrom in 1898 at the head of his class, in recognition of which honor he was awarded the privilege of making the Valedictory address. His poetic gifts were manifested early in his college career, and Prof. B. F. Sledd was prompt and diligent to encourage and direct him. In the college magazine his verses often appeared, and they were from the first of an order to command attention. In fact, while his poetry has gained in range, finish and abundance in the years since, the strain of his first productions may yet be traced in all his verse.

He was chosen to assist Professor Sledd as tutor in the department of English while he was taking his Bachelor's degree, and he improved the opportunity that was thus afforded to remain another year and win from Wake Forest the master's degree—the highest that the college awards—in 1899.

In 1900 he was elected Assistant Professor of English in Mercer University, of Georgia; but after a year he relinquished this post for the practice of law, having prepared for that profession at Wake Forest in 1896-1897, and received from the Supreme Court of North Carolina license to practice in 1897. He opened an office in Laurinburg—within a few miles of Spring Hill. It was my fortune to spend a day with him during this period. We were together in his office; there were clients, but their causes were obviously foreign to the genius of Mr. McNeill. The while he would be discussing some poem or reading at my request one of his own,

in would come some troubled spirit seeking his assistance in getting back a mule that had been swapped in a none too sober moment.

Nevertheless this was a fruitful period in Mr. McNeill's career—both as a poet and a lawyer. *The Century Magazine* readily accepted his verses, printed them with illustrations, and encouraged him to send others. On the other hand, clients increased, and, moreover, Mr. McNeill's fellow citizens sent him to the General Assembly of North Carolina—a member of the House. In this relation he acquitted himself well, bringing to his tasks a homely knowledge of his people and a sound common sense.

But there was no suppressing the higher call. With that fine appreciation which has made *The Charlotte Observer* notable for its young men—as well as its “Old Man”—editor J. P. Caldwell offered Mr. McNeill a place on his staff, with the freedom of the paper and the world. I have the editorial announcement to support me in the statement that Mr. McNeill was assigned to no especial post nor required to perform any particular work. His task was to write whatsoever he might be pleased to write.

We owe it to *The Charlotte Observer* that Mr. McNeill has had such freedom to exercise his gifts. His poems have come in perilous abundance; and at the same time he has done work as a reporter of public occasions that alone would have commanded for him a place on his paper. He has also produced no little prose of original character and great worth—paragraphs portraying life, humorous incidents, observations; and now and then a series of excellent fables as native to the soil and as apropos as those of Æsop.

Mr. McNeill's column of verses promptly commanded the enthusiastic praise of readers throughout the State and of the press in other States. He was hailed as a poet indeed, and at the first year's end he was unanimously awarded the Patterson Cup, in recognition of the fact that he had made the best contribution to literature in North Carolina. This cup was presented to Mr. McNeill by President Roosevelt. Within the year following he published his one volume, entitled "Songs Merry and Sad," and the first edition was promptly exhausted.

Mr. McNeill's poetic gift bears these marks: it is lyric; it is genuine; it is of the sun rather than the lamp; it is close to nature—the earth, the seasons, man and beast, home and the daily round of experiences. It is suggestive rather than descriptive, and spontaneous rather than labored. There is pathos and humor; but above either the strain of tenderness in dominant, tenderness of phrase and of feeling. One feels that he has yet to strike the greater chords, and at the same time he is convinced as he reads that he has all but done that, so nearly having attained it, that at any moment the larger gift may be ours.

Such songs as "Oh, Ask Me Not," "A Christmas Hymn," "When I Go Home," "Harvest," and "Vision," are tokens of a rich vein of the genuine gold; while the poems, "October," "Sundown," "If I Could Glimpse Him," "Alcestis," "The Bride," "Oblivion," "The Caged Mockingbird," "Dawn," "Paul Jones," as I have intimated, though they have not yet elevated Mr. McNeill above the rank of the minor poets, they carry a charm, they work upon the imagination with a power, they afford a subtle joy that bespeaks the noblest promise.

Since writing the foregoing sketch, *The South Atlantic Quarterly* has appeared containing a critical ap-

preciation of the poems of Mr. McNeill, by Edward K. Graham, Professor of English Literature in the University of North Carolina. He declares that Mr. McNeill is the first "North Carolina poet to win the ear of the whole State"; and speaks of his volume as "The most poetic collection by a North Carolinian that has yet appeared." He adds, "At a time when poetry has lost the appeal of passion, it is peculiarly grateful to come into the warm confidence of emotion always gentle, intimate, and manly, and in its best moments, infinitely tender." Professor Graham's conclusion, on the whole, is implied in his final sentence: "Conviction of great poetic power we seldom feel in reading the volume, but the presence of the divine gift of poetry we are always sensible of—the gift to minister to some need of the spirit—as when a simple heart-song speaks the heart of all mankind."

Thus the scholar's critical insight confirms the public taste which had already chosen Mr. McNeill as the favorite writer of all this region.

While the copy of this sketch was still in the hands of the printer the death of Mr. McNeill occurred, after a lingering illness, at his home near Riverton, Scotland County, N. C., October 17, 1907.

NORTH CAROLINA MOURNS THE DEATH OF A POET

BY EDWARD L. CONN.

John Charles McNeill is dead, and North Carolina mourns the death of a true poet. But no sarcophagus can hold captive the spirit of an immortal, and the soul of McNeill with its golden lute-notes will sing to many generations to come. His sensitive spirit was super-refined in the crucible of human suffering; his gentle heart was purified by the fire of experience, kindling within him a glow of sympathy that was reflected in all his singings, and a flame of human kindness that was both light and warmth to sorrow-shadowed and adverse-stricken hearts. When McNeill was moved to give expression to his emotions in verse, that expression was as sweet, as tender, as beautiful as the soft-stirring music of hope and comfort harped by celestial minstrel. He walked uneven paths, or no paths. Imagination's prodigal son, a dreamer, stirred by the wander-lust, moving restlessly from the lowlands close to the heaving bosom of the Atlantic, through the countless mingling glories of the interior to the everlasting mountains, where innumerable, awful forms lift their mighty heads toward heaven. He built on his heart an altar of love, and upon it offered to the Nature which gave him life the unblemished offspring of his genius.

Time will impartially place a just estimate upon the worth of his work, and critics will search and weigh the treasury of his mind. I knew John Charles McNeill as a man and loved him with the passionate fondness of a friend. Many years ago the infinite charm of his manner and the attraction of that personality, whose inherent goodness and grace and glory were the delight and inspiration of those who knew him well, drew me to him. His voice was music and thrilled; sad are those

friends who had made of his friendship a part of their own life, and who will hear his voice no more. But in his verses are comfort and good cheer, and he would not have them troubled.

Three months ago I saw McNeill last. We had met in the mountains that he loved so well and knew so intimately. They were decked in their midsummer splendors, and the exhilarating air, clear, sparkling water, flowers, birds, beasts and people, and the freedom and abandon of all did McNeill's heart good. To him it was a place of Edenic loveliness and completeness.

The press dispatches said his health was improved, and he returned east. But as he descended the eastern slopes of the Blue Ridge the gales that swept down upon him told him an eternal farewell; for Death was dropping a shadowy veil across his fine features; the lute-like voice was more nearly attuned to those which form the choirs invisible; and the lambent gleam in his shining eyes was a reflex of things that mortal eyes see not. McNeill was leaving the passes of the world and he realized it. He uttered no words of complaint, scarcely did he confess regret, nor found he fault with fate, or destiny, or God. Autumn transformed the hills and the vales and the lowlands and spread an indescribable beauty over the myriad places that were loved by McNeill, so that his ascending soul might view them in their utmost glory as he entered the avenues of the Unknown. But Winter will learn that he is gone, and will shroud the earth in mourning raiment.

An alumnus of Wake Forest, this college had a peculiar pride in McNeill's achievements. Lawyer, journalist, scholar, poet, gentleman: he was human and was not without flaw; but he was a man without an enemy. He was born to be loved, and he had the joy to know, years before his lamented and untimely death, that he had won the affections of the people of his native State.

JOHN CHARLES McNEILL

BY DR. ARCHIBALD HENDERSON, OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA.

The loss to the State of North Carolina in the recent death of John Charles McNeill is incalculable. Had I never met or known McNeill I should say the same thing. The South will feel his loss more keenly as time goes on. I believe that the verse of John Charles McNeill, aside from its notable merits as genuine poetry, has been unrivalled as an inspiring influence in the remarkable resurgence of literature which promises to give North Carolina in the near future a prominence of national moment. It would be incorrect to speak of the present era as the renaissance of literature in North Carolina. It is not a rebirth, but more properly a new, a virgin birth. Young men and women, informed with the spirit of scholarship, touched with passion for the beautiful, endowed with the divine fire itself, have risen up in our midst. The extent and value of their achieving is not yet either told or foretold. Almost at the same time throughout the State, many voices have found utterance. The younger generation is beginning to feel the magic pulse of the *Zeitgeist*, to shake off the stifling incubus of materialism, and to give voice at last to the sentiment and passion that is in their hearts.

Were I to symbolize North Carolina in a piece of splendid sculpture, I should image no Rip Van Winkle, musty with traditions and prejudices of the past, awaking from an ante-bellum dream. It should be represented by no man of middle age, fatigued with the heat and labor of the day, struggling up a steep acclivity to the precarious pinnacle of materialistic success. It

should be symbolized as a youth, just stretching his limbs in readiness for the part he is so soon to play in the spiritual life of the nation. The head should not be hung in shame for imputed backwardness or rebelliousness in the past, but held high; the eyes uplifted, the face transfigured by the light of the ideal, and wearing an expression which gladly says Yea to all the Universe. And the face of this statue should be the face of John Charles McNeill.

I could not, even though my heart bade, nor would I wholly, even though language might not fail me, express all that I feel and have felt over the death of John Charles McNeill. Liking, friendship, love are all so strange, so unique, so different from one another that the world has fallen into the slovenly habit of confusing the terms. I can not say that I "liked" McNeill or that he had my "friendship"; the world is already too full of people who never get beyond mere "liking," and who never mention "friends" save to boast of their number and importance in the world. But I can say that McNeill had my love, and that I was drawn towards him as to few men of my own age that I have ever known. There was about him the simplicity and the charm, if not of innocence, certainly of native gentleness. He had something of the primal, I might almost say the primeval, joy of life in his make-up. Here was a genius without the Weltschmerz, a poet lacking that devitalizing note of poignant melancholy which sounds throughout the poetry of the modern era, from Burns to Maeterlinck, from Heine to George Meredith. There was no tear engraved upon his armorial bearings. His was not that baffling and artificial simplicity, which in our day is the last refuge of complexity. He loved simple things—the pine-resin which a tiny girl gathered and sent him

all the way to Charlotte to chew, a homely and human story about some old darkey, a superstition about planting something or other in the dark of the moon, a bit of folk-lore lost to the tumultuous world of street cars, but still very vital in the life of people who live close to the heart of Nature. McNeill, in all he said and did, was racy of the soil. The modern world had not robbed him of his primitive glamour, and his native wood-notes wild poured forth in a stream of wonderful richness, in total disregard of the noise and blatant clamor of modern populations.

The old tag, "Human nature, is the same the world over," expresses one of the greatest errors ever compressed in a phrase. Human nature is different everywhere, by reason of the mere inequality of its distribution. Our phrase, "He's just like folks," is a high compliment; it means that the subject has a great deal of human nature in his composition. McNeill was charged to overflowing with human nature. His humor was unflinching. The things that stuck in his mind were not clever epigrams or brilliant bits of repartee. He loved to remember stories of large and genial humor, exhibiting some comical betrayal of human nature, illuminating some fine phase of human feeling. His spirit was sweet and gentle—beyond words. Harshness or bitterness seemed never to have touched him. Incidents that might well have grated harshly upon the sensibilities of any man left him unmarked and unprejudiced. He turned unpleasantness away with an easy and genial smile.

The conceit of men of talent, and of genius—artists, musicians, litterateurs—is proverbial. I have observed traces of it even in the greatest men of genius I have ever met. McNeill was utterly lacking, as much as I can con-

ceive it possible for any one to be, in all conceit or false pride. Coventry Patmore has said that true genius is never aware of itself. McNeill discussed his own poetry with perfect detachment. If there was any quality which he utterly lacked, it was self-consciousness. He discussed his own poetry as though it were the work of some one else. "Here's a little thing of mine," he would say, "that was copied from Maine to Florida. There's absolutely nothing in it. Why any one should have thought it funny is simply more than I can understand." And with equal lack of the faintest trace of embarrassment, vanity or *mauvaise honte*, he could say, "Here's another little poem of mine I am very fond of. I think it is one of the best I have done." And with a note of genuine pride, he would say, "Let me read you this one. The old man likes it"; and then, in that rich, mellow voice, he would give music and color to the beauty of his lines. I shall never forget the pleasure he once gave a New England woman—a person of fine sensibilities and herself a writer of verse. She was rapturously enthusiastic over his recital of his simple dialect poems, "Wire Grass," "Po' Baby," and "Spring."

As a lover of nature, McNeill was without an equal in sincerity and faith. As a student of nature, he was in no sense remarkable in the academic signification. He neither knew nor cared to know the sesquipedalian Latin name of some favorite little flower; he did not pretend to the chemical secrets of the soil survey; technical obfuscations of any sort were not for him. He knew nature not as a botanist but as a poet, not as a scientific naturalist but as a nature lover. Like Walt Whitman, rather than like John Burroughs, he was skilled, through close acquaintance and interested observation, in many curious and half-forgotten secrets of nature and her creatures

which do not find their way into the text-book. I never saw him without thinking of Whitman's poem about the student in astronomy who fled from the lecturer out into the night, there to lie down and look up at the stars in worshipful wonder and adoration.

I shall never forget a reading McNeill once gave us here at Chapel Hill—a running fire of dialect verse, humorous commentary, negro anecdotes, and folk-lore tales. It was, without exception, the most successful so-called “reading”—story-telling in prose and poetry were a fitter term of description—that I have ever known. With curious interest I glanced around for a moment to observe the utter absorption in McNeill's personality and its expression. There was not one person in that audience not wholly oblivious of surroundings, of self, of all else save McNeill, whose fine face lit up with a humorous glow, and his mellow, resonant voice with its subtle note of appeal, held them bound as by some mystic spell of sorcery. And McNeill often told me afterwards that the audience that night, for inspiration and perfect sympathy, was without a parallel in his experience.

I have never been able to rid myself of the feeling that John Charles McNeill has not been accurately or discriminatingly praised for some certain things he did supremely well. “Songs Merry and Sad” threatened to suppress the fact that McNeill was pre-eminently a poet of the common life, a singer of the farm, the field, the home. Many things which I believed to be fundamentally characteristic of McNeill as poet found no place in this collection. Things which I had learned to love and to expect from him—the negro, and Scotch dialect poems, certain fancies about Spring, half-remembered, even poetically divined sketches of early home and beloved countryside—of these there were only traces. Indeed,

in spite of the versatility displayed and wide range covered, I could not but feel the minimization, if not actual suppression, of that phase of McNeill's art which most appealed to me. Those who know McNeill's poetry only as revealed in "Songs, Merry and Sad," may be betrayed into ranging him alongside Mifflin, Moody, Arthur, Stringer, John Vance Cheney and Charles Hanson Towne, for comparison. Wider acquaintance with his poetry, I am inclined to think, would reveal that he is far more akin to Maurice Thompson, Frank L. Stanton, and James Whitcomb Riley. Dozens of poems not included in "Songs, Merry and Sad"—and, of those included, "When I Go Home," "Barefooted" and "Before Bedtime"—at once call to mind the specific features of Riley as revealed in such poems as "Thinkin' Back" and "Wet Weather Talk." There is the same large sense of lazy, rural ease, the chuckling air of boyish freedom, the vivid pictures of the simple pleasures, occupations, and discussions of farm life. I have often felt, in reading many of McNeill's fugitive lines in *The Charlotte Observer* that he had a humorous, quaint, backwoods sense of homely values not unlike the same qualities in the short poems of Frank L. Stanton. I do not mean that the mode of expression was necessarily the same; the feelings played upon, the sentiments evoked were identical. There was at times, in McNeill's verse, the careless or carefree instinct of truantry as we find it on occasions in the prose of writers so diverse as Robert Louis Stevenson, Owen Wister, and Harry Stillwell Edwards. McNeill expressed for me the individual and significant note of the rural South, much as Joel Chandler Harris may be said to express it in his own fashion. The natural feeling, the simple ideals of McNeill—frankness, loyalty, love, honor, courage—were irresistibly appealing in their

mere numerical limitation. Lacking any trace of the sectional, McNeill had a fine sense for local color and the genius of place. And yet there was no hint in his poetry of that strained and artificial idealism which mars much that has been written in the South.

In his brief and homely realism, his fancy so quaint and simple, McNeill was a master. Though it is not, I feel, the most apt illustration that might be found, the little poem, "Before Bedtime," suits my purpose for the moment in expressing that fine fidelity to fact, that pedestrian realism which is given only to spirits nursed on reality to achieve.

"The cat sleeps in a chimney jamb
With ashes in her fur,
An' Tige, from the yuther side,
He keeps his eye on her.

The jar o' curds is on the hearth,
An' I'm the one to turn it.
I'll crawl in bed an' go to sleep
When maw begins to churn it.

Paw bends to read his almanax
An' study out the weather,
An' bud has got a gourd o' grease
To ile his harness leather.

Sis looks an' looks into the fire,
Half-squintin' through her lashes,
An' I jis watch my tater where
It shoots smoke through the ashes."

For imaginative power of evocation of a familiar scene utterly simple and without any glamour of interest save that of fond association, this poem is illustrative of one of the things McNeill could do supremely well.

In his poems of nature, McNeill carries me back, less to Burns with his spirits cry of poignant pain, than to Wordsworth with his brooding quiet. There is even a

faint note of æstheticism now and then, notably in the Carmanesque *Protest*; like a true modern poet, McNeill is fired to revolt against this materialistic age, this twilight of the gods of poetry. McNeill's admiration for the *Marpessa* of Stephen Phillips was immense; and I have felt at times that he would have liked to owe something to Swinburne. The philosophic didacticism of Bryant, the almost scientific moodiness of Poe find no answering note in the poetry of McNeill. Indeed, he is content to observe with rare accuracy, letting Nature speak its message to you in its own most potent of tongues. McNeill was essentially an observer, not an intrepeter of Nature's moods. Instead of explaining, he re-created Nature, and was strong enough to hold his tongue and let Nature speak for herself. What need for words, either of interpretation, inspiration or regret, in face of the mute eloquence of such a picture:

"A soaking sedge,
A faded field, a leafless hill and hedge,

Low clouds and rain,
And loneliness and languor worse than pain.

Mottled with moss,
Each gravestone holds to heaven a patient cross.

Shrill streaks of light
Two sycamores' clean-limbed, funeral white,

And low between,
The sombre cedar and the ivy green.

Upon the stone
Of each in turn who called this land his own

The gray rain beats
And wraps the wet world in its flying sheets,

And at my eaves
A slow wind, ghostlike, comes and grieves and grieves.

And how worshipful in its submissive calm and adorative contemplation is that brief poem, *Sundown*, which always calls up for me the most exquisite æsthetic moment of my life—a post-sunset creation of God in sky, crescent moon, earth and mountain I once saw, or rather lived, in the Appalachians—a recollection that moves me profoundly even as I write:

“Hills wrapped in gray, standing along the west;
Clouds, dimly lighted, gathering slowly;
The star of peace at watch above the crest—
Oh, holy, holy, holy!

We know, O Lord, so little what is best;
Wingless, we move so lowly;
But in Thy calm all-knowledge let us rest—
Oh, holy, holy, holy!”

If McNeill had lived, and had regained his health, I am convinced that his poetry would have shown a finish, a dexterity of workmanship, a refinement of poetic craftsmanship of which he was fully capable on occasion. How often he delighted with a happy line, a transient imaging of a faniful concept, or a crystallization in one fine phrase of the spiritual content of his thought! He has told me many times that his future aim was towards greater perfection of phrase, clearer delineation of motive. In introducing him before our Modern Literature Club I pronounced him the most authentic poet North Carolina has yet produced. It is my definite conviction that McNeill is not fully known through “Songs, Merry and Sad” for those traits which are most signally characteristic of his temperament, for those qualities in which he was most individual. But by this I do not mean the faintest detraction from the many and varied merits of “Songs, Merry and Sad.” In fact, I was glad to learn from McNeill himself that the poem in this vol-

ume which I rated highest was also his own preference, the one in which he felt his purpose and art best expressed. This poem, judged by Richard Watson Gilder to be worthy of Byron himself, is *Oh, Ask Me Not*. We feel ourselves in the presence of the abandon of youth, the genuine heart's cry of "The world well lost for love."

"Love, should I set my heart upon a crown,
Squander my years, and gain it,
What recompense of pleasure could I own?
For youth's red drops would stain it.

Much have I thought on what our lives may mean,
And what their best endeavor,
Seeing we may not come again to glean,
But, losing, lose forever.

Seeing how zealots, making choice of pain,
From home and country parted,
Have thought it life to leave their fellows slain,
Their women broken-hearted.

How teasing truth a thousand faces claims
As in a broken mirror,
And what a father died for in the flames
His own son scorns as error;

How even they whose hearts were sweet with song
Must quaff oblivion's potion,
And, soon or late, their sails be lost along
The all-surrounding ocean.

Oh, ask me not the haven of our ships,
Nor what flag floats above you!
I hold you close, I kiss your sweet, sweet lips,
And love you, love you, love you!

McNeill once told me that while he regarded the central situation of "The Bride" the most potently significant, the most fraught with meaning that can be conceived, he always felt that he had not fully measured up to the opportunity and the situation. Perhaps it may

be true that our reserves are often more eloquent than our confidences. The office of poetry is not to exhaust possibilities. The selection of that moment of inexpressible meaning in life was in itself a stroke of genius.

"The little white bride is left alone
With him, her lord; the guests have gone;
The festal hall is dim.
No jesting now, nor answering mirth.
The hush of sleep falls on the earth
And leaves her here with him.

Why should there be, O little white bride,
When the world has left you by his side,
A tear to brim your eyes?
Some old love-face that comes again,
Some old love-moment, sweet with pain
Of passionate memories?

Does your heart yearn back with last regret
For the fairy meads of mignonette
And the fairy-haunted wood,
That you had not withheld from love,
A little while, the freedom of
Your happy maidenhood?

Or is it but a nameless fear,
A wordless joy, that calls the tear
In dumb appeal to rise,
When, looking on him where he stands,
You yield up all into his hands,
Pleading into his eyes?

For days that laugh or nights that weep
You two strike oars across the deep
With life's tide at the brim;
And all time's beauty, all love's grace,
Beams, little bride, upon your face
Here, looking up at him."

If there is any one poem which best expresses the real sweetness, the high seriousness of McNeill's character, and the finer nature of his poetic muse, I should say that

it was "To Melvin Gardner: Suicide." It is instinct with the quintessential traits of McNeill both as poet and man. To dilate the imagination and to move the heart is ample *raison d'etre* for any poem.

"A flight of doves, with wanton wings,
Flash white against the sky.
In the leafy copse an oriole sings,
And a robin sings hard by.
Sun and shadow are out on the hills;
The swallow has followed the daffodils;
In leaf and blade, life throbs and thrills
Through the wild, warm heart of May.

To have seen the sun come back, to have seen
Children again at play,
To have heard the thrush where the woods are green,
Welcome the new-born day,
To have felt the soft grass cool to the feet,
To have smelt earth's incense, heavenly sweet,
To have shared the laughter along the street,
And, then, to have died in May!

A thousand roses will blossom red,
A thousand hearts be gay,
For the summer lingers just ahead
And June is on her way;
The bee must bestir him to fill his cells,
The moon and the stars will weave new spells
Of love and the music of marriage bells—
And, oh, to be dead in May!

In Avery and McNeill the State has sustained losses not to be filled perhaps in a generation. Avery's hold upon the public was truly astounding; his audience was almost incredibly large; and I have often wondered how many people there were in the world who always turned first of all to the column marked Idle Comments in *The Charlotte Observer*. Avery expressed in prose of simple pathos and universal sentiment the piquancy, poetry, and romance of every-day life, the humour and the glam-

our of *tous les jours*. He dwelt lovingly upon the little touching incidents daily entering into the life of man-in-the-street. His views of quiet and delicate humour finds its analogue in Owen Wister. Avery always impressed me as an American Charles Lamb of journalism, with a tremendous infusion of sentiment. His appeal to the popular heart seemed to arise from his power of expressing those sentiments of tender and romantic content which this garish twentieth century has not yet quite succeeded in destroying here in the South.

In his own way, individual, unique, McNeill likewise expressed sentiment—strong, manly, sincere. His instrument was the finer of the two, and his triumph lay in his reserve. Strength and sweetness are the most fundamental note in the symphony of his art. His heart was genuine and true. His mood was never distorted by hopeless regret, futile despair, or catch-penny pessimism. His sentiment rang out clear and true—free from all taint of modern morbidity. Sentimentality had no place in his make-up. Gentleness not softness, real feeling and not imaginative emotionalism, informed his verse. And his ideal of art was fine and noble. Such a phrase as “his widowed sea” in *Paul Jones* is worth a dozen poems of the minor singers of to-day, and left the impression of potential greatness. I earnestly hope that the manuscript of the volume of poems McNeill read to me last spring will soon find its way to publication. Then we shall have even more convincing evidence that there has passed from our midst—and left us profoundly sorrowing, yet not before we have learned to admire and to love him, a fine and gentle spirit who was not only a talent *in esse* but a genius *in futuro*—John Charles McNeill.

JOHN CHARLES McNEILL

By J. P. CALDWELL, EDITOR OF THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER.

John Charles McNeill has embarked upon that unknown sea that rolls round all the world. We pretend to no shock of surprise. For long the mark of death has been written in his face and those who loved him most have not mis-read it. But reflect as we may upon the fact, seek as we may to accustom ourselves to the thought of his absence, it is new and cruel and the philosophy of life is invoked in vain for alleviation of the pain of it all. The public knew him through the exquisite verse he gave it and through which ran his soul, and admired him; but to those who were in intimate personal contact with him he attached himself with the tenderest ties of affection, suggested by something else than his mere intellectual qualities. There was never a sweeter spirit. His presence meant sunshine. He was uniform of mood, the mood ever delightful, and one who knew him to-day knew him yesterday, to-morrow, always. This was the man in person. Plain, simple, natural. He could not have pretended if he had wanted to; the beauty of his character was its perfect naturalness. He was amiable almost to a fault, and under this roof, where men are judged by each other, where friendships are cemented and characteristics discerned, no harsh words of his, no unkindly criticism by him of any human being can be recalled. It was a golden heart. He compelled affection; without trying to find his way into the hearts of people, he won irresistibly whoever came within the circle of his acquaintanceship. He was so near the heart of the writer that it is difficult at this moment to write of him conservatively, and it is not singular that

the proper words do not come when one stands in the presence of a great grief. It is the opprobrium of life that now as ever, while friends fall around us, the inexorable demand of duty compels us and we must go our usual ways, employ our common words and meet the great world with smiling faces, though our hearts be as heavy as lead.

North Carolina was good to this young man; it weighed him at his worth; he was conscious of this and was grateful for it—saying always that he was over-estimated and appraised for more than he was. Such was his modesty. The intelligent, discriminating public knew him better than he knew himself. We think it is not an exaggeration to say that he was the greatest genius our State has yet produced; that no one of our people has written such poetry as he. He would have combatted quickly the expression of this judgment, yet it is submitted in confidence to the deliberate consideration of those who have followed him, and there is the added test that he had ready access to the columns of the first magazines of the country.

He died before his time. He died when his genius had budded and was just coming into flower. There is no guessing what he might have accomplished. Nothing could apply better than the words written of another:

“Touched by his hand, the wayside weed
Becomes a flower; the lowliest reed
Beside the stream
Is clothed with beauty; gorse and grass
And heather, where his footsteps pass,
The brighter seem.

And then to die so young and leave
Unfinished what he might achieve!
Yet better sure
Is this, than wandering up and down
An old man in a country town,
Infirm and poor.”

"To die so young!" That seems to be the tragedy of the case.

Forever while those who knew and loved him—and we are many—live, he will be mourned and missed. Dear fellow! He lacked in his last nights the blessed boon of sleep, and there could be no more appropriate conclusion of this lame and impotent tribute than in the reproduction of his invocation to that elusive goddess, one of the latest as it was one of the sweetest things he ever wrote:

TO SLEEP.

"Wherein have I displeased thee, fickle Sleep,
O sweetheart Sleep, that thou so far away
Hast wandered and hast made so long thy stay?
I perish for some spell to call and keep
Thee near me, that thy gentle arts may steep
My brain with calm, from dusk till dawn of day!
The night's long hours are blind and love delay,
But, with thee, I would bless them that they creep.

Once, night by night, as love's own self wast thou;
Over my boyhood's couch didst loose the powers
Born of the opiate breath of autumn flowers,
And with thine own cool hand assuaged my brow;
Wherefore, I pray thee, keep not from me now,
For I am summer, and thou art her showers."

UNUTTERABLE

BY H. F. PAGE.

The twilight of a second Sabbath eve
Dies slowly from thy tomb.
Dim pines that moan, dusk-shapes that grieve
Bend spectral in the gloom.

Heaven lowers dark above without a star.
The chill October rain
Sobs ceaselessly 'mid gusts that jar
The night with throes of pain.

Spray-beatings these from off the sunless shore
Of sorrow's troubled deep,
O'er whose far silence, evermore
Grief broods, but can not weep!

NOTE.—Written the second Sunday after the death of Mr. McNeill.—
EDITOR.

AN INARTICULATE OBITUARY

BY R. L. GRAY, IN RALEIGH NEWS AND OBSERVER.

The man who writes these lines knew John Charles McNeill. He not only knew what he wrote but he saw him write. He has even written about the same things McNeill did—and wondered afterwards why he did not write them as he did. Yet the quality that baffled perception, that astonished with its simplicity and amazed with its insight, was so near akin to genius as to leave to his friends no door to envy. McNeill, who was so generous in praise—and so fond of it—commanded affection as well as admiration because he was in a class to himself in what he did and because, in what he was, he was in the great class that puts on no airs, that is easily made glad, and is not ashamed to laugh.

Knowing the man, the fact that he is dead makes one want to throw up his hands and surrender with a shrug. Some one asked me to write something about him. I replied that I should not write a line, in the face of the fact. Yet the line has been written, obscure as it is, and from the heart.

If you would know the heart of McNeill—and it is worth knowing—read his songs. In them you will find much that is commonplace. In them you will find—occasionally—the record of a man who was driving a talent. But among them, you will find, also, much that is golden, much that is fixed with the transient quality of genius, much to make the heart to beat and to cause the soul to wonder. When McNeill wrote things at his best, they were so exquisite, so well fashioned in the mould of perfection, that those who know the instilled fatalism of the East were more than half prepared for

the catastrophe. The gods are jealous of their own. One felt that, in the expression of himself, McNeill was endangering the life that he so well loved, and the life that so instinctively loved him.

All that does not matter much to the people who did not know McNeill—long, bluff, hearty Scotchman, perpetuating in his openness and merriment some tragic Irish strain. By the people at large it was as a poet that he must be judged and not as the man who lived poetry even when he did not write it. I remember his going to a circus and being lost in the contemplation of a man and the gnu! I remember him again, the details of a political speaking in his head, traveling with a politician along a dusty September road and falling into silence as we rode and livened the way with jests. And I remember so vividly reading afterwards what we had seen without knowing it:

“And in deserted churchyard places
Dwarf apples smile with sunburnt faces.”

I remember again, on one of the hills that look out towards the infinity of other hills, pausing with him a moment or so before we struck the trail back to the train and the writing of a “story” on the back of a seat, and to have seen later:

“Hills, wrapped in gray, standing along the west;
Clouds, dimly lighted, gathering slowly,
The star of peace at watch above the crest—
Oh, holy, holy, holy!
We know, O Lord, so little what is best;
Wingless, we move so lowly;
But in thy calm all-knowledge let us rest—
Oh, holy, holy, holy!”

He, living, knew that “names and knowledge, idle breed of breath, and cant and creed, the progeny of strife:

"Shrink trembling from the cold, clear eye of death,
And learn too late why dying lips can smile:
That goodness is the only creed worth while."

We know, also, how :

"The Sun swings farther toward his love, the South,
To kiss her glowing mouth;
And Death, who steals among thy purpling bowers,
Is deeply hid in flowers."

We know, also, that "beneath thy queen's attire, woven
of blood and fire, beneath the golden glory of thy
charm—

"Thy mother heart beats warm,
And if, mayhap, a wandering child of thee,
Weary of land and sea,
Should turn him homeward from his dreamer's quest
To sob upon thy breast,

Thine arm would fold him tenderly, to prove,
How thine eyes brimmed with love,
And thy dear hand, with all a mother's care,
Would rest upon his hair."

Nor would one forget, "down on the Lumber River"
where * * * "all the swamp lies hushed about, you sun-
burnt boys"; that never did he cease to share—

"Your hardships and your joys,
Robust, rough-spoken, gentle-hearted,
Sunburnt boys!"

We might explain it all by saying that McNeill was a poet and that poets die young. That does not compensate, for he was so much more than a poet. He had the love of the naturalist for nature—and for men. He was of no cult, no creed, no class. There was that in his great, simple heart, in his magnificent impertinence, in his out-spoken love that was all-compelling. Women he adored, with a frankness that was the ultimate of reverence. To men he was not ashamed to express affection.

For life he was not afraid to admit his passion. In him was the mixture of joy and sadness that seems to mark the resentment of the poet against the passing of life. In him, too, was the true poet's contempt of all except feeling. He could come without a coat to town and borrow one to cover his dress garments when he gave away the Patterson Cup—from a keeper of a haberdashery whom he had never seen before. He was the first to hear the birds in the springtime, and there was no bird he could not imitate. With men he was wholesome and clean and robust; with women he was romantic and tender and obeisant. To his work he bowed as before a Goddess—who could not be appeased.

I remember how for a moment he thought he had gained her favor when he gave to me the words of that exquisite lyric, "Love, should I set my heart upon a crown," and I have thought since that there he wrote most truly of himself—gay, loving and sad, stirred with ambition, seeking truth and dazzled away from the search with the joy and beauty that he distilled impartially from the smoke of a city or the early dews of country life:

"How teasing truth a thousand faces claims,
As in a broken mirror,
And what a father died for in the flames
His own son scorns as error;

How even they whose hearts were sweet with song
Must quaff oblivion's potion,
And soon or late their sails be lost along
The all-surrounding ocean:

Oh, ask me not the haven of our ships,
Nor what flag floats above you!
I hold you close, I kiss your sweet, sweet lips,
And love you, love you, love you!"

I quote from memory and McNeill wrote better poems. He gave more promise in three years of work than the literature of the State has evidenced in three generations. What he sang, sang itself; and when he tried to sing otherwise he played a broken lute. In his untimely death—in his irritating death—the State loses one who was beginning to show that the song of its cotton mills was the outer expression of the song in the hearts of a people who loved truth and were drunk, if inarticulate, with beauty. He was the spokesman for the silent rhymes of rough lives and soft hearts. There was a touch of Burns about him, and just a hint of Byron. Those in the State who have a brief for a literature that is mostly made out of hope have in his death a quarrel with fate.

But those who knew the poetry of his character, as distinguished from the melody of his lines have,—in the moment of pity and of sorrow for the passing of a man who had wooed and won the favor of life like a precocious lover—a grief that is forced to embrace hope in lieu of understanding.

JOHN CHARLES McNEILL—SOME REMINISCENCES

BY H. F. PAGE.

When I entered college in 1897, Mr. McNeill was in his senior year, and was also serving as Instructor in the Department of English. While a freshman, therefore, it was my privilege to come in touch with him both as fellow student and also as teacher. This twofold acquaintance I shall always remember as one of the rare privileges of my life.

At the opening of the session I first met him in the old dormitory. Here our associations began. His room was second door opposite mine on the fourth floor. Naturally we were thrown very much together during the year, and an opportunity was thus afforded me for catching glimpses of his personality from a standpoint especially interesting, as every old student of the college who is acquainted with life in the dormitory is aware.

That he was a favorite among his fellow students I, at once, recognized. His congeniality and fine sense of humor attracted every one. Unassuming, modest, magnetic in manner, he moved among us with that rare personal bearing, in the presence of which every one feels at perfect ease. His fellow students knew and recognized his genius, but, if I mistake not, they appreciated the charms of his personality more. His most wonderful capacity for association completely ignored the ordinary lines of separation in college life. To put it in colloquial phrase he was, in the truest sense, "one of all the boys."

These elements, found so happily blended in the character of Mr. McNeill, are nevertheless associated oft-times with peculiar susceptibility to danger, and sometimes it

is the case, and most pathetically so, that the very free-heartedness of a noble nature, unsuspectingly at first, yields up the strategic point to its own security. This some of us who were with Mr. McNeill in college saw, but not as we see it now, ten years after.

Before his class Mr. McNeill lost nothing of his magnetic manner. It was rather intensified; especially so when presenting one of his favorite authors. He was naturally more sympathetic than critical in his discussions. He felt the inner beauty and soul of poetry and endeavored to imbue the mind of the student with something of the same appreciation. Most vividly I recall his interpretations of Poe, whose ideals in poetic form enter so largely into his own work. Poe was his model in form, Burns his ideal in sentiment. Since *Songs, Merry and Sad* have been given to us, I have come to look upon this little volume of lyric gems as a natural sequel to those class room lectures to which it was my delightful privilege to listen.

His manner as a teacher was simple, direct, forceful. His vein of quaint, elusive humor appeared here at greatest advantage. Tactfully and yet without the least indication of studied effort he held the attention of his class. His low, rich voice—marvelously musical—possessed a holding power such as is rarely met. To me this was the most remarkable of his personal charms. It was a voice wonderfully deep, luringly mellow, with soft minor modulations—such a voice as we naturally associate with the poet. And many times since his death to others, doubtless, as well as to myself, has recurred the lament of Tennyson—

“O, for * * * the sound of a voice that is still!”

To members of his class Mr. McNeill was always ready to give help. And he gave it with such freedom and

ease of manner that it seemed more a pleasure than a task. I remember how, one evening after I had handed in a composition, he came into my room to go over it with me and offer most helpful criticisms and suggestions. This is only one of the many instances of assistance for which I am indebted to him as a student. And doubtless many others, who were members of his classes that year and the year following, oft-times since his death, have in like manner recalled his gentle, painstaking attitude toward their blundering efforts, and have blessed his memory as teacher.

After he left Wake Forest, we met but two or three times. During our last talk together, incidentally our conversation turned on the unaccomplished in Southern literature. He said that the life of our people is a sincere life, remarkable not so much for the grandeur of its themes as for their variety and richness, especially in the lyrical vein.

This was his first vision of his kingdom as a poet. That he was true to the vision the work he has left with us is sufficient indication. What other visions might have been his to glimpse and to bring ultimately into realization, had he remained with us, we can only vaguely conjecture. If it be true that the songs he has given us are only the prelude to a richer depth of melody and harmony which fate has so untimely shut away from us, how great is our loss! Other singers will arise to sing, but however sweet the melody of their music, still over all will forever brood the melancholy of this unfinished symphony. Yet we will hope that somewhere in a realm where mortal frailties are forgiven—forgotten, his poet-soul, glory-rapt, stands in the presence of

“A beauty that ne’er was on land or sea,”

and that we, too, ere long shall behold—with him.

SUNBURNT BOYS

By J. C. M.

[Published by the kind permission of the printers, Stone & Barringer.]

Down on the Lumber River,
Where the eddies ripple cool,
Your boat, I know, glides stealthily
About some shady pool.
The summer's heats have lulled asleep
The fish-hawk's chattering noise,
And all the swamp lies hushed about
You sunburnt boys.

You see the minnow's waves that rock
The cradled lily leaves.
From a far field some farmer's song,
Singing among his sheaves,
Comes mellow to you where you sit,
Each man with boatman's poise,
There, in the shimmering water-lights,
You sunburnt boys.

I know your haunts: each quarly bole
That guards the water-side,
Each tuft of flags and rushes where
The river reptiles hide,
Each dimpling nook wherein the bass
His eager life employs
Until he dies—the captive of
You sunburnt boys.

You will not—will you?—soon forget
When I was one of you,
Nor love me less that time has borne
My craft to currents new;
Nor shall I ever cease to share
Your hardships and your joys,
Robust, rough-spoken, gentle-hearted
Sunburnt boys!

THE SUNBURNT BOYS

BY ONE OF THE SUNBURNT BOYS.

O, Lumbee River, haunts of nature and sunburnt boys, come and mourn with us! Our companion has departed. Not our scholar, not our poet, but our robust, rough spoken, gentle-hearted Sunburnt Boy,—the boy who was reared with us in the neighborhood of Riverton, in his much-loved home, which looks out towards the lands of the rising sun and now sheds its tears among the tranquil waters of the Lumbee River. Our friend, our loved one, our brother, has gone to the blessed lands of the hereafter. Is it so? Is it possible that a Christmas has passed without his presence and his voice?

Oh! but summer is drawing near. The birds will soon be heard as they sing in the trees that shade his country home as though they make the music for his pen. The lazy Lawrence will soon be seen on the house tops and across the furrowed land. The trout will begin to make their beds among the roots of the old cypress tree that juts out over deep water at Cypress Bend. The white spot on the minnow's head will soon be seen as he glides lazily amid the bonnets. Here is the fishing pole, and here is the bait-gourd, here is the broken handled hoe that digs the earth-worms, but can it be true that the owner has resigned his place among us boys for a happier home on high? Oh! that memory might fail us and his name might be heard no more, but joy is mingled with our sorrows and what pleasure it gives to know that although he has departed, yet he lives in his songs, merry to some but sad to us. In his poem, "Sunburnt Boys," he asks us not to forget him. How can he be forgotten?

His place has been established, never to be taken away. Lumbee River, you will not forget your son. The pines of the forest will ever grieve for the absent one, and sunburnt boys, who will be our leader?

But what of this? Wherein does this concern others than the sunburnt boys and neighborhood in which we were reared? Let us draw our thoughts from the sad present and the blighted pleasures of the future and glance backward to some of the incidents of his merry youth, and see if we were not indeed a group of jolly sunburnt boys.

As the spring would draw near and the frost would give way to a cold and chilling dew, we would shed our shoes and stockings as a snake deserts his skin. The first warm days in March was the time set to take our first plunge in the Lumbee. From that time on until the last of September the old paths along the banks were made fresh, after the winter's snow, by the sunburnt boys. The budding of the hickory and the nightly shrieks of the whippoorwill reminded us that the time had come to set our hooks at night for the "horny tribe," as we called the cat-fish. We were not considered tough each spring until we had taken a barefoot race across the broom straw stubble, where it had been burnt and had just begun to sprout up again. But most of the summer, while we were not "holding off the calf," fixing up the pig pen, or plowing a mule, was spent in our boats on the surface of the old Lumbee's waters. The best boat we had was *The Wild Irishman*, made by Charles himself. In the water we were a group of ambitious youths, each one trying to out-do his fellows in running, jumping, diving, swimming, "ducking," and rowing. In each of these contests we had to give way to the long strides of Charles, the nimble leap of Charles's

limbs, the long, deep plunges of Charles's diving, the rapid strokes of Charles's swimming and rowing.

But wherein did the poet differ from the rest of us sunburnt boys? He expressed in words what we, too, saw and felt but could not tell. When he went to the field to plow he always carried a little pocket edition of Shakespeare or some other favorite writer with him, and in this way did he take advantage of the shade of the persimmon trees at the farther end of the field. He had a quiet disposition and sometimes, while we realized his presence, yet to him he was all alone. In the woods he always kept his eyes open to the beauties of nature and taught us boys to be students of nature. But we can understand this more fully by reading his songs.

On his return from college after his first year we felt a little distant when we saw his fair face; he was the first of us to go to college, and had won the gold medal, which he wore. We felt that he would not be the same Charles after he had been made assistant in English his first year; but our clouded brows soon became wreathed in smiles when we saw him go to the closet under the staircase and pull out his old last summer's trousers and sunshade hat. His first question was, "How's the river, boys? How's the river?"

His greatest pleasure was to see the fair complexion made by the dense shade of the campus at old Wake Forest College turn to the tan of his sunburnt companions.

Thus he was the same Charles throughout his short life.

With all honors possible bestowed upon him at Wake Forest, and during his brilliant career of literary achievement, he was always one of us; even last summer he was just a grown-up, blue-eyed, curly-headed, sunburnt boy.

And oh, the consolation in knowing that he came back to us to die in his own little room next to the roof. Five or six of the boys had the sad pleasure of being with him during his last illness, and as they sat by his bed he would say, "Pull back the curtains, boys, so that I may see the wind in the trees and glimpse the last rays of the autumn sundown."

Charles, your presence will ever be with us, even when we are old men you will be young, for you did not live to be old.

JOHN CHARLES McNEILL AS THE COLLEGE JOURNALIST

For one to fully realize what interest Mr. McNeill took in college journalism, let him search the pages of *THE STUDENT*, published during the time he was in college. As editor of *THE STUDENT* for two years, he displayed wonderful talent as an editorial writer. His editorials are written well and concisely—many of them on current events. These show truly the man's independent spirit and his well taken and sane view-points.

Below we give extracts from three of his editorials and two of his poems, which were published in *THE STUDENT*:

LEGENDARY LORE IN NORTH CAROLINA

[Published in November, 1898.]

Cherished tradition is the cradle of patriotism; it is more inspiring even than a glorious history, because it is more alive. We love the decaying old homestead with its memories of childhood more than a glaring, newly-painted residence. So we love the country where our fathers lived and hugged their foolish superstitions and met with their wonderful adventures more than the country where they stood up stiff and lifeless, covered with dates and statistics, as they do in history. Tradition gives us the inner life of the people.

North Carolina is by no means poor in legendary lore. In the east there is a nest of stories about Virginia Dare, and about Bluebeard and his fellows; in the west the doings of the remarkable schoolmaster Ney, of the far-famed moonshiners, and of certain cave-dwellers are familiar in every household. The tour of Lafayette through the State is well known in a historical way, but every year we are losing the little incidents which would make that tour live forever at our firesides. We have legends of the Indians, of the Croatans, of the heterogeneous immigrants who first settled North Carolina, of the Regular period, of the Revolution, of the ways of slavery, and of the Civil War.

EXTRACT FROM EDITORIAL PUBLISHED IN THE STUDENT,
JUNE, 1898

[In answering the taunts of Dr. Broughton against base-ball, Mr. McNeill replied in an editorial, an extract of which is given.]

Speaking of college base-ball: * * * The ball-player is no more responsible for the gambling than is the farmer who makes corn responsible for the drunkard.

* * * Some kind of physical exercise is needed in college. Pale-faced, haggard students, with sunken chests and knock-knees, whose hollow voices remind one of the well-known hymn, "Hark from the tomb the doleful sound," are not the men to hand on to posterity the sturdy manhood of the Anglo-Saxon race. Their brains like their bodies will soon be infected with the dry rot: and after this dry rot is allowed to proceed for four years, it is unlikely that the refreshing showers of active life will ever be able to moisten and restore it to fertility. But unpleasant exercise is impossible: men will not indulge in it, and if they would, the laws of hygiene pronounce it not conducive to health. On the other hand, brutal exercise should be allowed to sleep with the dark ages. The golden mean, a game both pleasant and gentlemanly, is base-ball. And so the Faculty of Wake Forest College, as well as those of nine-tenths of other American colleges, in the light of their thorough knowledge of the situation, not only permit ball playing, but encourage it in every way they can.

Why, then, are there so many self-constituted dictators on a subject which most of them imperfectly understand? There are two answers: First, it is a peculiarity of human nature that men talk more loudly about things of which they have only a smattering knowledge than about those which they have thoroughly investigated. The great Sunday school speaker is he who goes to Sunday school only when he is to speak; the eloquent adviser of farmers is the city-bred man. The second answer is better given by illustration. Some still night, for example, kick your dog and make him yelp. Every cur in the community will at once respond, the alarm will spread, and during the remainder of the night the baying of watchdogs will come and go like the ebb and flow of a tide. Or if Smith's rooster happens to crow, each neighboring rooster will pass it on, until there is crowing from Greenland to Cape Horn. So everything is quiet on this base-ball question, when Dr. Broughton, eagerly seeking for something to say, wanders far from his subject in order to attack athletics, and by so doing gives rise to phenomena similar to those above described. Do not understand this as a reflection upon the opponents of base-ball. They are sincere gentlemen. It is merely a little observation that may be of interest to the evolutionist.

In one case, at least, physical activity and Christian character dwell together—in our present ball team.

DULL AND HYPOCRITICAL PREACHERS

[Published in the October Number, 1898]

Preachers enjoy many privileges which are denied to laymen, and rightly so. They fill in a measure the position of both prophet and priest—God's representative to us and our representative to God—the highest position attainable by man. And for that reason they should

as far as possible be men of tact and talent, and always profoundly religious. Our colleges furnish them free tuition, and our boards of education lend them money in order to have an educated clergy. But this, in common with most other charities, suffers abuse. While many seemingly dull students turn out useful and able men, still it is sometimes true that hopeless dullards place themselves upon the hands of the colleges to be dragged along for a year or two, and are then turned out as leaders among men. The name given them by the shrewd small boy, "softies," indicates the amount of their influence on the world. But there is a far greater abuse than this, where hypocrites sail under the colors of the church merely for the financial and other advantages they get from such a course. You find the names of ministerial students on our college registers who are now teachers, lawyers, dentists, and the like. "Will a man rob God?" Indeed, it seems so.

But what is the remedy for this evil? To destroy the tares is to destroy more or less of the full-grained wheat. It would be unwise, unbenevolent, and unchristian to refuse aid to sincere ministerial students on account of the hypocrites for whom they are in no wise responsible. The churches must look out for themselves, and not attribute perfection to all who wear "preacher coats." They must be careful in calling pastors; get only consecrated, reasonably gifted men, and so force all others out of the ministry. When a congregation can say of their pastor that he is a good man but a poor preacher, or a fine preacher but a hypocrite, that congregation is in a bad way. Every pastor ought to be both a thoroughly good man and a reasonably good preacher. A dullard is repulsive to intelligent men; and a hypocrite is, as Bacon says, "a coward toward men, but brave toward God." Deliver us from both!

YOUTH FAREWELL

[Published in December Student, 1897.]

Farewell, my boyhood days!

Sadly we part.

Time bears to unknown ways

My trembling heart;

And as we swiftly fly,

I strain with dimming eye

In vain to trace

The fading features of thy face.

Sadly we part.

Full many a joyous time

Had we together,

In autumn's dreamy clime,

In summer's sultry weather.

THE WAKE FOREST STUDENT

How often hoped, how often built in air,
 And climbed to fame upon a golden stair!
 But now 'tis o'er,
 Thou com'st no more; no more
 We'll be together.

Would we might meet again,
 Thou youth once mine!
 To follow in the ways of men,
 To roam in open field or fen,
 Thy hand in mine,
 Far better than alone to soar
 From height to height forevermore,
 O youth once mine!

But could we ever stay
 Here side by side,
 Romping like birds in May
 Far, far and wide,
 No smiling heaven could draw my heart
 With thee and thy glad self to part.
 Therefore, dead youth, calmly to-day,
 But sadly, we part.

SPIRITS OF YULE

[Published in the January Student, 1898.]

Druid of the mystic days,
 I see thee in the light
 That shimmers from the Yule-tide blaze
 This holy night!

A thousand years reach out to thee
 Their white and glossy hands,
 And bind a thousand realms to thee
 With golden bands.

Far over the silent, frost-white fields,
 And forest wild and bare,
 From where the sounding ocean yields
 Its secrets rare,

Through earth and air and steel-gray sky,
 Thine unheard voice hath spread,—
 A voice comes from lands unknown,—
 Voice of the dead.

O Spirit of the Beautiful,
Dwell with mankind!
Let us be once undutiful,
Let us be blind!

In all this cold and naked life
Grant us, we pray, one night
To see again the young world wrapt
In dreamland light!

Bring us the childhood of the past!
Bring us its mystery!
Dethrone proud Science, crush his crown
Of harsh reality!

Winds from the wide, still northern plains,
Sing wild, wild and strong!
Flame from the dying hearth, sing thou
A quiet song!

Druid of the sacred oak and mystic mistletoe,
Come near at Christmastide,
And while the world is clothed in snow,
With us abide.

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EDITOR'S PORTFOLIO

LEE M. WHITE, Editor

John Charles In the death of Mr. McNeill, North Caro-
McNeill lina and the South has lost one of her most
 brilliant men of letters. The "Robert
Burns of the Old North State" is with us no more. Wake
Forest weeps for her son whom she is justly proud to
claim. Every lover of the beautiful, of poetry, of na-
ture, feels his loss keenly, for his pen

"Singing the songs of the field and the fen
As sang the lark; as sang the wren,
Dreaming of songs still yet unsung
Lo! The silence falls on heart and tongue."

Mr. McNeill, as year by year passed away, commanded
a larger band of followers, and then to have been taken
at the time when he was coming into his own. But yet
we have, if not his presence, his own words to comfort
us. As expressed so beautifully by one of our North
Carolina poets:

"As leaf by leaf I sadly turn
These pages o'er,
A sweeter thought than e'er I've caught
From them before
Rises to comfort me.

Are these not broken lisplings of
A richer theme
Toward which thy soul, frail-bound,
Didst yearn and dream
Till one should set it free?"

Mr. McNeill's genius is remarkable for its versatility. Herein he surpasses his contemporaries. His dialect poems, his serious, and quaint humorous stanzas and couplets have each to themselves a distinct charm. Throughout all his poems there runs that native grace and freedom of expression, that "something" which only the born poet possesses. Even the most casual reader can but notice what a completeness of workmanship his poems are. His was a natural perfection and grace of expression which even our Poe would have praised.

His favorite poet, Burns, seemed to be his ideal as regards his less serious stanzas. As regards his other verses, there is in them that seriousness which probably his love for Poe had engendered, and yet, there are some of his poems which only his master hand could have fashioned.

Strongly embodied in his poetry is the love of life, its many beauties, its sorrows. These show more truly than anything else the man's heart attuned to the very clearest note of accord with Nature and her God. His soul was full to overflowing with life.

"To have seen the sun come back, to have
Seen children again at play—
To have heard the thrush when the woods are green
Welcome the new-born day,
To have felt the soft grass cool to the feet,
To have smelt earth's incense, heavenly sweet,
To have shared the laughter along the street."

Yet, in the short time in which he lived he seems to have drunk deep of the well of life. But somewhere, with all these blessings, there lurked in him that premonition, that intangible fancy that it would not be long.

"Green moss will creep
Along the shady graves where we shall sleep.
Each year will bring
Another brood of birds to nest and sing.

At dawn will go
New ploughmen to the fields we used to know.
Night will call home
The hunter from the hills we loved to roam.
She will not ask,
The milkmaid, singing softly at her task,
Nor will she care
To know if I were brave or you were fair.
No one will think
What chalice life had offered us to drink,
When from our clay
The sun comes back to kiss the snow away."

Would that he had lived so that he could have more fully realized his own high ambition!

"Would that I might live a thousand careless years,
To drink each cup of pleasure thou canst give,
And learn some time within far-distant days
To sing in thy great name a worthy song."

JOHN CHARLES McNEILL

BY THE FACULTY EDITOR.

I have been requested by the Editors to add a word to what has already been written in praise of the talented young poet to whom this issue of THE STUDENT is dedicated. What I write must be in the form of personal reminiscence; to others has been accorded the privilege of critical judgment.

Mr. McNeill entered the Modern Language Department at the beginning of the third year of his college course and remained in this work for three years, completing the advanced courses in French and German. His work in the first year classes was characterized by thorough conscientiousness and scholarly care and exactness. Without difficulty he won and retained throughout the first place.

The testing-time, however, for all students of language is in the advanced classes, where mastery of detail must be combined with true literary appreciation in order to gain the highest success. It is just at this point that most students fail, and again it is just at this point that the faithful teacher experiences either the humiliation of wasted energy or the unspeakable pleasure of seeing his labors adequately rewarded.

I can never think of Mr. McNeill's participation in advanced Modern Language work without being reminded of the fine words put by Moliere in the mouth of one of his characters: "There is pleasure, you must grant, in working for persons who are capable of appreciating the delicacies of an art, who are fully conscious of the beauties of a work, and by intelligent approbations reward you for your toil. Yes, the most delightful reward possible to receive for what you have done is to see your work adequately recognized and fostered by praise that does you honor. There is nothing, in my opinion, which pays you better than that for all your trouble, and intelligent applause is truly the most exquisite joy."

Two instances are sufficient to illustrate what I wish to say in this connection. During the year that Mr. McNeill was a member of my Advanced French Class, I made bold to introduce a play that had just appeared with great eclat upon the stage of Paris,—I mean Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*. It was with some degree of trepidation that I awaited the result of this innovation. But it was not long in declaring itself. McNeill, with the instinct of genius, was immediately filled with enthusiasm for the beauties and the splendid theatrical effects of the piece; to this enlightened leader the whole class responded in ready sympathy, and the study of the modern French drama was during that year (pardon the alliteration) a succession of successes.

Encouraged by such results, I ventured an experiment (a thing I rarely do) in my advanced German the next year. I introduced for trial a little prose idyll—Rosegger's *Waldschulmeister*, a pretty, but, I thought, somewhat overrated story. The result was as I had expected. As far as McNeill was concerned the piece fell flat. He could hardly summon up enough interest to fittingly prepare the daily reading-lesson. Sincerely thankful when this book was finished, I introduced the class at once into the study of Heine's poems. McNeill became a transformed man; not satisfied with the volume of extracts, he bought a copy of Heine's Complete Poems, and for two months the volume was scarcely out of his hand. His whole heart went out into the sweet and tender lyrics of the great German writer, and poet with poet it was love at first sight.

This is not the occasion for me to speak of the close bonds of friendship that drew me to John Charles McNeill—of his genial smile, his helpful sympathy, his abundant store of the most delicious humor, fresh, sparkling, and inexhaustible as an ever bubbling fountain. It is fitting to state, in conclusion, that no man ever loved his Alma Mater more than he, and it is a question whether it was the college or THE STUDENT that was uppermost in his thoughts. Throughout his college course he was a constant contributor to its pages, and during his editorship (a position with which he was honored for two years) he gave to the magazine the best that was in him—the magnificent outflow of youthful genius.

At the time when the Editors contemplated the Lee Memorial Issue last session, Mr. McNeill was requested to contribute a poem. To this request he readily com-

plied and wrote the little poem which appeared at the beginning of that number—a poem full of devotion to Lee and yet mentioning with praise that other great American, Lincoln, whom the South honors as well as the North. Accompanying this poem was the following characteristic letter, which I transcribe almost in full:

Dec. 7, 1906.

This replies to your request received to-day. I am a poor judge of my stuff, and I rely on you to "kill" these verses if they will not hold their own with the other material in THE STUDENT. I am pleased to know of your enthusiasm and that you are all trying to give the magazine a new toe-hold. When I write in it I should like to do respectable work, for I take pride in the fact (I think it is a fact) that I am the only boy who was ever an editor of THE STUDENT two years in succession.

Believe me,

Cordially yours,

JOHN C. MCNEILL.

We, the editors of THE STUDENT, wish to thank our contributors for the articles which they have so kindly written for us. For the words of encouragement and interest, we are indebted to many.

We hope that this memorial of our poet will be a fitting tribute to his memory for those who loved and admired him, for those who will yet come to love him.

NOTICE.—THE STUDENT was unavoidably delayed on account of the impossibility of securing the contributions by the date we usually go to press. Knowing that the work of this memorial can be done but once, we have waited.

We wish to say that an article from Mr. R. C. Lawrence, in the course of preparation now, will be published in the next number. Mr. Lawrence has been delayed in the completion of his article.

EXCHANGE DEPARTMENT

HILLIARD J. MASSEY, Editor

Prompted by the suggestion of a friend, we wish to call attention to the dearth of stories dealing with phases of college life. This is not confined to a few magazines alone, but we may say to the majority. While most of the college publications show a high standard in the material they put out, still it seems that the contributors might submit stories of real college life; stories which exhibit the spirit and trend of the institutions which they represent, instead of so many love stories and dry essays. We ourselves plead guilty to this charge, and offer no apology. But we hope to see more work permeated with college spirit and enthusiasm.

The first of the November magazines that we notice is *The Clemson College Chronicle*. It opens with a fairly good poem, followed by "The Cigarette," a first-class story. The plot is good and well arranged; the characters are portrayed in a life-like manner, and the writer makes them talk, which adds considerably to a story. It is a detective story—a form which is hard to handle. "The Development of Electrical Power in the Piedmont" is an article showing the development of future possibilities in this favored section of North and South Carolina. "Cupid Conquers" is a love story. This is the second and last installment of the story, the first part having come out in the October issue. It is an excellent piece of work. Enough of adventure and excitement are put in to make it interesting. The writer, by using the well-known tact of many story-tellers, closes the first part at a point where the reader is anxious to get the rest of the story. We think it better to have the whole story in one number, unless exceedingly long. "The New South" is an old subject and one often used, but 'tis well "to harp on such a moulder'd string," for the South is rapidly coming to her own again, and we should speak and write of it. "A Freak of Nature" seems incredible until the physicist explains it. The editorial columns are of medium length and fairly well conducted.

The Wesleyan.—This greets our eyes with pictures of the editors. The magazine is well proportioned, but a number of the pieces are too short. We find some good verse and two good stories. "The Princess and the Fool" shows ability, but from the beginning one suspects that the Fool will turn out to be the Prince. And so it happens. 'Tis made too evident at the start. "Why She Changed Her Mind" tells how a brother converted his sister from her "stuck-up" ways.

The Concept comes as a welcome visitor. Some one has remarked that girls are more apt at writing verse than boys. After reading two excellent poems in *The Concept* by Kate Drayton Simons, we have about reached the same conclusion. In our opinion, they are the best we have yet seen in our exchanges. The music and easy flow of language claims the attention. Rarely we see such productions from a student's pen. Some other good verse is thrown in at intervals. "Converse Commencement Debate" is very good, but we think it not appropriate in a magazine. Yet in this instance it adds something to the publication. "A Thanksgiving Blessing" and "In Case o' Sickness" are stories worthy of some mention. "The Wit of a Page" is the best in the magazine. As a whole, *The Concept* is good.

Randolph-Macon Monthly next claims our attention. "The Turning Point" is a good story, but the author seems to have an indefinite idea as to how it will turn out. In fact, one fails to catch the purpose. "The Railroad Rate Case in North Carolina" shows some study of the question. "The Iron Maiden" is told from the viewpoint of the first person. It is rare that a story can be interestingly presented in this form, and should not often be attempted unless one is a master in the craft. But in this case the writer succeeds well. Narrative ability is displayed. The style is good, and the hideousness and terror remind one of Poe's sanguinary productions. "Renunciation" is a pleasing poem. We have seen the same theme treated under the title of "Mother." But the poem betrays no lack of originality. "Letter from a Self-Made College Man to His Son" is short, and the writer takes the right view of the situation. The editorials are strong, clear, and cogent. The magazine is one of the best.

The William Jewell Student.—We read this with pleasure and pronounce it among the best on our table. It seems that the editor wants short stories, etc., for the magazine. If we may offer a suggestion, our criticism would be lack of long articles. The quality of the contributions is exceptionally good, and quantity would place it in the front ranks. "De Superlative Dinnah," written in negro dialect, makes one's mouth water for "'possum and taters." More such productions should be encouraged. "The 'Crescent City': Its Historical Importance" gives a short sketch of New Orleans which is entertaining. "Things Are Not Always What They Seem" is an amusing short story and presents the young man in a ludicrous predicament. "Fifty Years' Getherin's" is typical of the "Wild and Woolly West," and has a flavor of cowboy life. "The Strong Men Believe in Cause and Effect" is better than the usual articles of its kind.

We acknowledge receipt of the following magazines, a large number of which are excellent: *The Mercerian*, *The Eatonian*, *The Hendrix*

College Mirror, The Central Collegian, Wofford College Journal, The Palmetto, The Newberry Stylus, Isaquena, Davidson College Magazine, The Trinity Archive, The Guilford Collegian, State Normal Magazine, The Red and White, The Howard Collegian, Southwestern University Magazine, The Winthrop College Journal, The College Message, The University of Virginia Magazine, The Black and Gold, The Susquehanna, The Acorn, Pine and Thistle, Vanderbilt Observer, Brenau Journal, The University Magazine, The Cosmos, Ouachita Rifles, The Philomathean Monthly, The Index, The St. Mary's Muse, Chimes, The X-Ray, The College of Charleston Magazine, The Emory and Henry Era, and The Furman Echo.

CLIPPINGS

"A fluff, a frill,
A smile, a thrill,
A ring, a look,
She's now a cook."—*Ex.*



?

Sweetest thing in all the world,
Just the dearest little girl,
Is she?

Sweetest thing in all the land,
Just the dearest little man,
Is he?

Sweetest couple would they make,
If the man she'll only take,
Will she? —*E. K. A., in The Concept.*



"Non paratus,' freshie dixit,
Cum a sad and doleful look,
'Omne rectum,' Prof. respondit,
'Nihil,' scripsit in his book.—*Ex.*



Don't let her little brother see
You kiss your dear farewell,
For all philosophers agree
'Tis the little things that tell.—*Ex.*



TO BE OR NOT TO BE.

I'd rather be a Could Be,
If I can not be an Are;
For a Could Be is a May Be
With a chance of touching far.

I had rather be a Has Been
Than a Might Have Been, by far;
For a Might Be is a Hasn't Been,
But a Has was once an Are.

Also an Are is Is and Am;
A Was was all of these;
So I'd rather be a Has Been
Than a Hasn't, if you please.—*Ex.*

WAKE FOREST ALUMNI

CHARLES S. BARNETTE, Editor.

—Rev. Caleb A. Ridley, of Live Oak, Fla., who is a Western North Carolina man and a Wake Forest man, has been called to the First Baptist Church, Beaumont, Texas, to succeed Dr. J. L. White, who comes to our First Church at Greensboro. Mr. Ridley is only thirty-four years old and has been greatly blessed of God in his work. At Live Oak, where he has been for three years, he has built an elegant house of worship, added four hundred to the membership, and otherwise strengthened and built up the work. A great opportunity is opened to him in Beaumont. —*Biblical Recorder*.

—'89-'91. Zeb. B. Sanders is practicing law at Albemarle, N. C., and is meeting with much success.

—H. W. Brickhouse is at LaFayette, Colorado, and likes the place.

—E. Delke Pierce is at Anderson, S. C., in the graded school.

—'79-'84. W. B. Pope, of McMinnville, Ore., Corresponding Secretary of the Oregon Baptist State Convention, has a glad and thankful heart. Soon after he left the State Secretaryship in Colorado for a similar work in Oregon, he was seriously injured in a railroad wreck. The recent session of the Colorado Convention sent to him a love token which amounted to \$200. He renews his subscription to *The Word and Way* and says: "The subscribers get a great deal more than their money's worth in direct returns." His Oregon brethren have delighted his heart. Dependent upon crutch and cane indoors, and a wheel-chair outdoors, he has done his best. The first time in the history of the organized work in Oregon the Convention closed the year with a balance instead of a deficit. The campaign was conducted from Pope's sick room, but it was successful. His brethren honor him. He is gaining in strength, but he needs rest and special treatment. God is blessing him and his Oregon brethren.—*The Word and Way*.

—'89-'92. The Accredited Press Gallery Correspondents of Washington, D. C., at their meeting on November 30th, elected Thos. J. Pence to the Standing Committee of Correspondents which shall serve during the 60th Congress as the body to manage the galleries in conjunction with Speaker of the House and the Committee on Rules of the Senate. This is the first time a Southern man has been so honored. Mr. Pence represents the *Raleigh News and Observer* in Washington, and is an able newspaper correspondent.

—'50-'55. Prof. A. J. Emerson, D.D., famous at William Jewell College, an alumnus of Wake Forest College, and Mrs. Bettie A. Calhun, formerly of Liberty, N. C., were united in marriage in Denver, Col., November 6, 1907. We congratulate these two excellent people. Their present address is 3631 West ——— Avenue, Denver, Col.

—In the November issue of *Modern Language Notes*, Dr. Joseph Quincy Adams, of the Department of English in Cornell University, corrects an error repeated by one authority on English from another. The error is the attribution of a poem, "What Thing is Love?" by Robert Greene, to the Earl of Oxford.

—'88-'91. Mr. John A. Oates announces in the *North Carolina Baptist* for November 27 that he has sold that paper to the Biblical Recorder Publishing Co. He has been editor of *The Baptist* for fifteen years, and turns over to *The Recorder* a constituency of 7,400 subscribers. He is Chairman of the Anti-Saloon League of the State, and will give much of his time to the further promotion of the cause of temperance, which already owes so much to his unselfish labors. He will continue the general printing business of the N. C. Baptist Publishing Co. in Fayetteville. He was lately elected President of the Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce.

—'07. Mr. Herbert L. Wiggs of Atlanta and Miss Torrey of Philadelphia were married at the home of the bride's father, Rev. R. A. Torrey, on the 18th of December, 1907.

—'86-'89. Dr. John E. White, pastor of the Second Baptist Church of Atlanta, on the invitation of the University of Virginia, preached three sermons there the last of October. His address on the occasion of the farewell banquet in honor of John Temple Graves in Atlanta seems to have been the chief address, and was printed in full in one of the Atlanta papers. Dr. White speaks of two Wake Foresters in the University of Virginia: "Our two Wake Forest men are in strong evidence by President Alderman's side. Dr. R. H. Whitehead, known around Wake Forest as 'Dick Whitehead,' is dean of the Medical Faculty. Prof. Harry Heck is full Professor of the new chair of Education. He not only teaches his classes, but does educational extension work by lectures over the country. Of him I heard the highest praise." He adds, "The University authorities treated me with distinguished courtesy."

—Postmaster Willis G. Briggs of Raleigh attended the recent Convention of the Postmasters of Georgia at Macon, and made an address on the "Relation of the Postmaster to the Community." Mr. Briggs was the moving spirit in the notable Raleigh convention of October last.

—'83-'87. Prof. J. B. Carlyle, of the Chair of Latin, was unanimously elected President of the Baptist State Convention at its meeting in Wilmington this month to succeed Mr. W. N. Jones ('75-'79), the

retiring President. Prof. Carlyle justly deserves this mark of recognition from the Baptists of the State for the noble service which he has rendered *Wake Forest College* and Baptist education in the State during the past twelve months. In that time, alone and unaided, he has raised \$112,500 to be added to the present endowment of Wake Forest College. This was a great undertaking, and one requiring unceasing labor in its accomplishment. But Professor Carlyle undertook it with his characteristic zeal and vigor, raising \$112,500 in the time specified by the Carnegie Education Board upon which condition it will donate \$37,500 to the endowment, making Wake Forest College \$150,000 better off to-day than it was twelve months ago.

—In the Cambridge correspondence to *The News and Observer*, dated November 16, 1907, we notice the names of three Wake Forest men who were admitted to the Carolina Club at its last meeting. They are B. W. Parham ('00), P. C. McDuffie ('04), and G. R. Edwards ('07). In speaking of the meeting of the club the correspondence goes on to say: "A more hearty, enthusiastic patriotic gathering of sons loyal to their mother State than that which met in No. 304 Carnegie Hall on November 2d would be hard to find. It was the first meeting of the year. Hundreds of miles from home, these young fellows met on a common ground; they were all Carolinians. A stranger dropping among them would not have realized that he was in staid old New England, for their minds and hearts and tongues were all intent on things "down home." Nearly all of them graduates of Southern colleges, they naturally turned to those good old days of college life—of ball games between rival colleges and especially of some great Thanksgiving game in which Carolina had walloped Virginia. Another striking illustration of the spirit that prevails among the Carolinians at Harvard which is forcibly brought out at their meetings is the interest in the future of the South, especially the Carolinas. These fellows are talking about what they intend to do when they go back home, for they are all going back. In a few more years there will not only be a Carolina Club at Harvard, but there will also be a Harvard Club in Carolina. The Carolina Club has never been so large, nor has such a hearty, fraternal spirit prevailed among its members as at present. It may and does justly claim to be one of the strongest State clubs at Harvard."

—'74-'77. The following tribute to the judicial ability of Judge Erastus B. Jones is taken from *The Fayetteville Observer*, and is headed "Judicial Philosopher":

"Judge E. B. Jones, who has been holding the fall terms of Cumberland Superior Court, closed his final term for this county on his present round yesterday, and left on the noon train for his home in Winston for a few days rest before going to Columbus and Robeson counties to hold his final courts in the district.

"There is no gainsaying the fact that Judge Jones is an original and interesting character, and withal a gentleman of engaging and delightful qualities of mind and heart. He is a man of marked individuality; a good natured man and kind-hearted judge, who administers justice tempered with mercy.

"Tall and stalwart of form, broad shouldered, with strong, rugged and clear-cut features, a large and massive head, crowned with a full shock of hair once black, but now silvered with grey, in the meridian splendor of a vigorous and healthy manhood, Judge Jones, both in person and bearing suggests the rugged hills and mountains among which he was born and reared and has lived. His manner and presence are suggestive of the pure and invigorating breezes which fan the hilltops and mountains of his native home, and there is combined in his unique personality at once the acumen of the able lawyer, the poise of a sound jurist, the ripe wisdom of a true philosopher, and the ready wit of a native-born humorist.

"Without sacrificing the judicial dignity, his Honor is always quick to see the humor that is apt to characterize the most solemn judicial proceeding, and is himself sometimes the unconscious author of humorous incidents connected with the trial of a case. There is nothing dull about a term of criminal court when Judge Jones presides. His charge to the grand jury is full without tedium, and delivered with a force and emphasis that leaves nothing to doubt. One admirer who heard his charge for the first time pronounced it "a fine judicial sermon," and later assured his Honor of his firm conviction that any judge who could talk to a grand jury like that stood a good chance of heaven when he died.

"Speaking of his Honor's wit: In the trial of a white man charged with whipping his wife, at a recent term of court in another county, the man came into court with his wife, an attractive and modest-looking little woman, and informed the Court that he and his wife had "made it up" and that he wished to "draw" the case, as they call a *nolle prosequi* in this particular county. Now, if the gallant Judge may be said to have a pet aversion, it is the man who maltreats the gentler sex, especially the wife-beater. Rightly suspecting the whipping was not the mild affair represented by the defendant, a big strapping fellow, the wife, with evident reluctance, was required to go on the stand and testify to a most cruel and brutal whipping at the hands of the husband. Whereupon his Honor remarked to the defendant, 'My friend, you have "drawed" just twelve months on the public roads.'

"In the rush of business at this week's court in Fayetteville, two regular juries were constantly in requisition to dispatch the business of the court. At one time both juries were out, one on a hog-stealing case and the other on a fighting and shooting scrape at Hope Mills, which proved to be quite a bloody affair. Another case was called, and no jury

in the box. The Sheriff enquired of his Honor if he should call another jury. 'Where is the other jury?' asked the Court, with rising irritation, forgetting for the moment that both juries were busy with cases. 'Considering the Hope Mills case, your Honor,' responded the Sheriff. 'O,' called back the Judge, with returning good humor, 'I had forgotten the battle of Hope Mills.'

"It is such flashes of wit and choice bits of humor as these that constantly brighten and cheer the pathway of those who have to do with courts of justice presided over by Judge Erastus B. Jones. And who shall say that even the guiltiest convict does not go to his punishment with a lighter heart and perchance a fixed purpose of future amendment, in the soothing reflection that the sentence of the law was imposed upon him by a just Judge whose heart was too full of sunshine and good nature to hold aught in malice against any man, most of all a poor unfortunate who is 'down and out.'"

IN AND ABOUT COLLEGE

H. E. PEELE, Editor

—December!

—Snow!!

—Examinations!!!

—Here's to the holidays!

—Mr. Edward Conn is now associate editor of *The News and Observer*.

—Mr. J. B. Farmer, of *The Biblical Recorder*, conducted chapel exercises on November 27th.

—Miss Minnie Gwaltney, the head nurse in our College Hospital, was called home during the early part of the month by the death of her father, Rev. W. R. Gwaltney.

—Mr. Livingston Johnson, Secretary of the State Mission Board, paid us his annual visit on the first Sunday in December.

—The following Y. M. C. A. officers have been elected for the ensuing year: C. J. Jackson, President; N. A. Melton, Vice-President; R. L. McMillan, Recording Secretary; J. D. Carroll, Corresponding Secretary; J. M. Adams, Treasurer.

—Rev. R. P. Walker, of Lenoir, an alumnus of this college, visited his home here recently and was greeting his old friends among the boys. He led the prayer services in chapel on Friday morning, December 13th.

—The second of the series of college lectures was delivered by Dr. Raper, of the University of North Carolina, in the early part of December. His subject was

The Schoolmaster's Doctrine of Economics, and his lecture, both interesting and instructive.

—The one hundred and fifty thousand dollar increase in the endowment of Wake Forest College is a fact, the raising of it is history, and Prof. J. B. Carlyle, who was unanimously elected President of the Baptist State Convention at Wilmington, and who has been styled, in the happy phrase of *The Biblical Recorder*, the Prince of endowment agents, is the man of the hour. Thunderous applause greeted his first appearance in chapel after his return from the Convention, and for many days he was kept busy answering the questions of eager enquirers who wanted to know how the thing was done. Often disappointed but never discouraged, Professor Carlyle gave himself heart and soul to this endowment movement, and, as usual, he has brought things to pass. Now that victory has crowned his efforts all the difficulties encountered and the obstacles overcome but add to the weight of the glory of his triumph. Let those who love Wake Forest and rejoice in the promise that the future holds for the old college never, in days to come, forget to give honor to him to whom highest honor is due.

—Nowhere was the news of success in raising the endowment fund received with greater and more genuine enthusiasm than among the students of the college itself. Eagerly and impatiently the boys waited to hear from the Convention, and when at last the telegram announcing victory was read before the student body in Memorial Hall, cheer after cheer rang through the building. It was cheering that meant something, too,—cheering which sprang from the same enthusiasm and love for the college that had already expressed itself in dollars.

—The most delightful entertainment afforded us in many months was that presented by Mr. Albert Arm-

strong, who appeared, on November 26th, before an appreciative audience in Memorial Hall in his illustrated lecture, or rather, picture-play, *Lorna Doone*. As each picture was thrown upon the screen the lecturer, standing in the shadow, so effectively impersonated the characters represented that one continually found himself forgetting that it was the lecturer and not the pictured characters who spoke. Should Mr. Armstrong visit us again we think that he would be given a larger audience.

—On the evening of the 7th Mrs. Sledd delightfully entertained a number of friends in her home. Several musical selections were rendered, Mr. Hubert Poteat, Miss Ruby Reid, Miss Bessie Dunn and Mrs. Sledd each contributing one or more selections to the program. After the music delicious refreshments were served and then followed games without number and fun without measure. Indeed the entire evening was one of unalloyed pleasure to all who were present. The guests were Misses Hallie Powers, Lulie Dickson, Ruby Reid, Bessie Dunn, Lula Dunn, Ada Lee Timberlake, Mattie Gill, Mrs. J. L. Allen, Mrs. J. R. Crozier, Mrs. John Brewer; and Messrs. Hubert Poteat, W. H. Vann, George Marshall, John Brewer, Will Furman, Leslie Hardy, C. M. Oliver, Lee Weathers, Lee White.

—The class contests in football are over and the laurels rest with the team of the junior class. It is safe to say, however, that there has been played on our athletic field no such exciting series of games for a class championship in several years. The final struggle was between the juniors and the sophomores, and these two teams met one another when each had a brilliant victory to its credit. In the first game between these teams there was no score. At one time, indeed, the juniors were within a bare inch of a touch-down, but just at the

critical moment the sophomore line grew as rigid as rock and would not be moved. The second game looked, in the beginning, as though it would be a repetition of the first; but somehow, before the first half was over, "Buck" McMillan got around the sophomores' end, and close by his side was Leggett. The goal was hardly less than forty yards distant, however, and no one dreamed of a touch-down yet. There were two or three sophomores in the way. But none of these sophomores ever got hold of Buck for a fair tackle. Leggett's splendid interference put every one of them out of the way, and the juniors scored. The sophs fought hard in the second half, but their confidence was gone. Again and again Collins was hurled against their line for a gain, and at the end the score stood 18 to 0 in favor of the juniors.

—On November 27th, at the old Purefoy Hotel, the junior team celebrated their football victory with a banquet, to which several young ladies of the Hill were invited. The company were received by Mrs. Crozier and Mrs. Sledd, and the evening was spent in feasting and merry-making. Toasts were proposed, responses were made, and speeches were called for. Indeed, overflowing good humor and sparkling wit characterized the entire occasion. A few weeks later the sophomore team was given a smoker by Mr. Will Duffy, the President of their class, and here, too, we are informed, the fun was fast and furious.

—So far as basket-ball is concerned, Wake Forest is certainly far and away beyond anything in the State. Having seen our boys pile up 63 to 0 on Littleton and watched them do Trinity Park to the tune of 57 to 8, we were anxious for them to get hold of a real team. So we sent them to Trinity, and in due season came the message bearing the news of Trinity's downfall. She was

beaten by a score of 20 to 11. Then came Guilford's turn, and once more the welcome news of victory came to us, the score, this time, being 18 to 15. Then, at last, to our delight, Trinity paid us a visit. It was a glorious game. Trinity had the evident advantage in weight and height, but Wake Forest outplayed her. That's all there is to it. Once more the score stood 20 to 11 in Wake Forest's favor. Guilford, however, gave us the snappiest, fastest game that has ever been played on the floor of the Wake Forest Gymnasium, when she came to try her fortune here. But despite fast and spectacular playing, Guilford suffered the common fate, and left us with another victory to add to our list—29 to 10 was the score. Thus during the fall Wake Forest has played six games and won them all! "Here's to Wake Forest!" May she find other worlds to conquer in the coming year.

—Following the game with Trinity the visiting team were invited to a smoker, which was given in their honor by Mr. J. W. Bailey. Our own team and a few outside fellows were present to help in making the occasion pleasant for the visitors, and pleasant indeed, we trust, did it prove. When refreshments had been served and when all were seated and comfortably smoking, Mr. Bailey, the host, took full charge of the proceedings. After a few kindly words of greeting and welcome to his Trinity friends and guests, he called on Dr. Poteat for a patriotic,—a call to which Dr. Poteat responded with his usual dignity and felicity of expression. There then followed speeches from the coach and from the captain of the visiting team, and to these Captain Couch, of our team, responded. With toasts and speeches the evening passed all too quickly, and our boys bade their Trinity friends good-bye with sincere regret.

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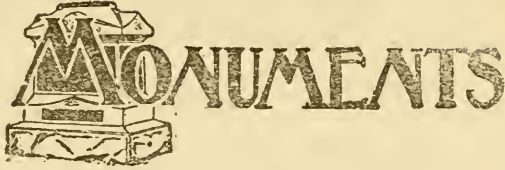
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